

THE LEGENDARY FRANKLIN and PITTSYLVANIA RAILROAD



by
A. D. RAMSEY



Dedicated to A Memory!

This story on the F and P with notes on other railroads is just a glimpse of the early means of transporation and a fond look at these means.

"There were three classes of tickets sold on the F & P.

1. If you got on and stayed on.
2. If you got off and walked.
3. If you got off and pushed.

They all cost the same - 35 cents.

ON COVER:

This photo of the only engine on the F & P Railroad was taken in 1920. The train crew included standing, left to right, brakeman unidentified, Mr. Haskins, Mr. Mayhew, conductor, and Clifton Doss, engineer. M. I. Scruggs is in cab and the fireman is unidentified. The little girl is Mr. Haskins' daughter.



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The Legendery Franklin and Pittsylvania Railroad

Many - many long year ago
A railroad was born you may know
as the F & P;
It was born in trouble and strife
Failure followed all of its life
The little F & P
It never won very much fame
To those who knew, certainly a Cherished name.
The dear F & P.
From Rocky Mount to Gretna, It struggled along
Until it became a memory and a song
The loveable F & P.
As time moved on and progress moved in
The little train just couldn't win
The struggling F & P.
The train will never come back
This is a Certainly a well known fact
The dear little F & P.
Tho time and years may move us far away
The puffing engine and the ringing bell will stay
The Legendery F & P.

A. D. Ramsey



CHAPTER 1

The Legendary Franklin & Pittsylvania Railroad

This is the story of a railroad that had its origin some 92 years ago and to many is legendary even forty years after the tracks were abandoned. Signs of the circuituous line from Gretna to Rocky Mount are still visible in the fills and cuts, most of the stations are still standing though converted into stores, dwellings or service stations.

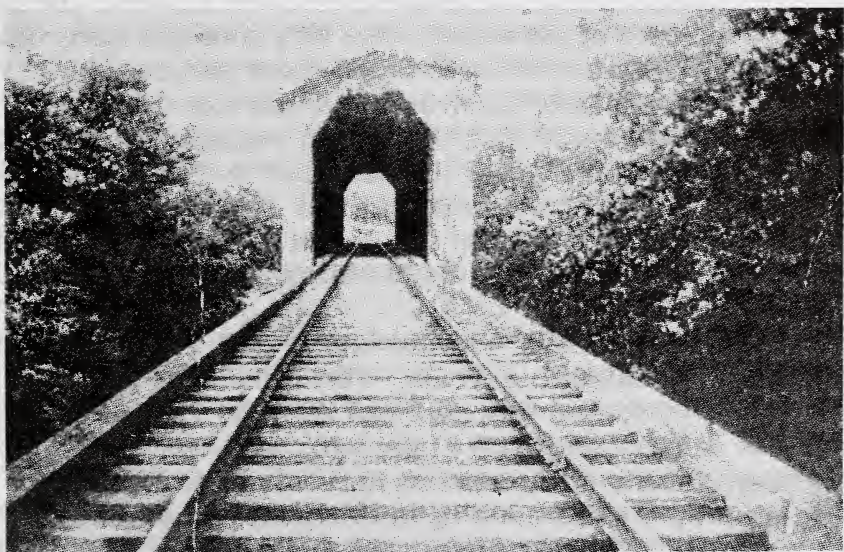
This railroad might be described as a problem while struggling to exist for over 50 years. It seemed a nuisance then but now to those of us who lived in that age it is a loving memory. Of course, F and P stood for Franklin and Pittsylvania Railroad, but it was often called, "Fast and Perfect" and it provided laughs for all the years of its life and even to the present time. Many times it really was "In again, off again, on again, gone again."

Sometimes it spent the day in a cornfield, off the track, and it groaned and wheezed many times before it could climb the steep grades on the 36.85 mile run from Franklin junction to Rocky Mount.

The story of the construction of the roadbed from Rocky Mount through the red mud and pine hills of Franklin and Pittsylvania Counties to Franklin Junction, (now Gretna), was one of hard work with pick and shovel.

The road bed extended from Franklin Junction up Hogans Hill, or Farmers Mountain, where the grade was so steep that the load always had to be divided with the engine taking part of the load up to Pittsville and returning for the rest.

Once they tell us that one car broke loose as the engine coupled to the last half of the train and was not missed until several stations farther along the line. The long trestles and the dark covered trembly bridges across Pigg River were considered as outstanding construction of that age - no machinery - just manual labor. Mostly the roadbed followed the streams. The dirt road which was built shortly afterwards followed the track and is said to have crossed it 39 times. The writer remembers traveling over this road on a wagon and seeing the mud almost touching the horses stomach in many of the little ravines between the crossings. The present day State



Route 40 in several places is on the exact roadbed of the old F and P.

The F and P didn't begin as a joke. It was supposed to herald the opening of the West (Western Pittsylvania and Franklin Counties). One of the main reasons for the road was to haul ore and minerals from the mines at Pittsville to Elba, (later Franklin Junction and at present time Gretna). In 1877 the Pennsylvania Steel Company had purchased iron ore beds in Franklin County. The mines at Pittsville of Baratese and Manganese were already in operation. So the receivers for the Washington City, Virginia and Great Southern, John S. Barbour, decided to build an eight-mile narrow gauge railroad from Franklin Junction to Pittsville. This road connected with the Lynchburg and Danville division of the Southern. This new road filled a real dream. The wagons that hauled the ore from the mines were slow and the dirt roads were impassable in the winter months. The iron monsters, as the engines were often called, could haul many times more than the mule trains and in just a fraction of the time. This meant much to the economy of the county.

The dream of extending the line from Pittsville to Rocky Mount linking the Southern railroad with the Pumpkin Vine line of the Norfolk and Western, now became a reality. This meant much to the economy of Southeastern Franklin as it offered transportation for lumber, fertilizer, tobacco, and produce. The roads of the county were very poor and many times impassable and the train was much faster and cheaper.

The Franklin and Pittsylvania Railroad was chartered on or about March the 12, 1878. This railroad was a joint venture with the Franklin County voting a Bond issue for \$200,000.00 and the Great Southern Virginia Midland and Washington City chippin in \$100,000.00 and the dream of a railroad from the Norfolk and Western to the Southern at Gretna became a reality.

A lease was made between the F and P and the great Southern for thirty-four years. The agreement held for the thirty-four years and though Bond Issue by Franklin County was not paid off until years later when the lease expired, the Southern returned the railroad to the county. It had tried to give the property to the county in 1894 but Franklin County was too smart for this. The county got a permanent unjunction re-

quiring the Southern to operate the train until the end of the lease.

The first engine was a wood burner and every few miles the train was compelled to stop and load wood. Farmers along the right-of-way cut the wood and stacked it in piles, this boosted the economy of the counties. The conductor signed a statement for \$1.50 a cord and this was paid from the Rocky Mount Office.

During May 1880, the first train was composed of freight cars, express car, passenger coach including separate compartments and a mail car.

The train traveled the full distance in about four hours. The engine was called "Capt. C. W. B. Hale" after a Confederate Veteran who operated the Jubal A. Early house at Rocky Mount, Chris Hecker was first engineer, with John Adkins succeeding him. It is interesting to note that the engineer was paid \$3.00 per day, the conductor and fireman were paid \$2.00 and the brakeman, \$1.00 per day. The narrow gauge made quite a problem as all trucks under the freight cars had to be changed at Gretna before being transferred to F and P Line.

This confusion lasted until about 1886, when the Richmond and Danville railroad took over the property of the Virginia Midland, which included the F and P. The new operators changed the narrow gauge to standard gauge tracks. Someone laughingly said, "It didn't change the gauge on the profits." The new operators also put on coal burners, instead of wood. This disrupted the local economy as farmers along the track had been making money selling wood. The addition of the coal burning locomotive boosted the economy of some people, as one person states, "My brother and I used to run along the tracks picking up coal as it fell off the train, later selling it to Blacksmiths for fuel." They received seven cents to 10 cents a pack (small bag).

When the Southern realized it had to keep the F and P for the term of the lease, it tried to run the line like a big time deal. The track was standardized into standard gauge line. Nine stout stations were constructed (1900 to 1910). These were adequate for its freight storage and comfortable for the passengers and agents working in the stations.

The stations, Pittsville, Toshes, Sandy Level, Ajax, Penhook, Union Hall, Glade Hill, Redwood and Gretna, and Rocky Mount, soon developed into hustling little Community

Centers as all freight, mail and produce passed through these stations.

The Southern constructed a string of nine stout heart pine stations, each with waiting rooms for white and colored, mail room, express depot and ticket office. Now time had made many changes, the bustling community center stations have all but disappeared. Sandy Level remains about the same as constructed, save faded from the struggle with the elements and surrounded by vines and forest. All the businesses have moved up to the highway (40). Union Hall is perhaps the best preserved of the two remaining stations. It is the home of Robertson's Grocery facing Route 40. Except for a stock of groceries and merchandise, it has remained about the same in appearance (outside).

The station at Gretna (Franklin Junction) is about the same as then, except for renovation and modernization. The Franklin and Pittsylvania railroad unloaded on opposite side of the station from the southern line as it stands today. The area where the fill and track stood is serving as a parking area today. Sometimes the brakes failed on the train and on one such brake failure day, the train ran off the end of the track on the ground. A drummer (traveling salesman) on the train that day dryly remarked that he liked the town very much, but the train had a very poor way of unloading passengers.

The station at Pittsville was torn down several years ago and is a part of the D. W. Hunt General Store. This little village was the junction point for the ore mines.

The depot at Toshes has been torn down years ago. The exact location has disappeared also.

Ajax used the store and home of J. D. Yeatts as a flag stop. A wooden arm extended out and caught the mail when the train has no passengers or freight for that place.

Angle Siding was a whistle stop and it served a large area. This writer flagged the old train several times at the siding and listened to the two blasts from the oncoming engine to indicate intentions of stopping. The deep-wooded area surrounding the siding afforded a safe place to tie the horses at a safe distance. Someone once said a young man was trying hard to control his struggling team and a stranger offered to help. "Yes, you can help - hold pa," was the quick response.

The Pen Hook Station served as a dwelling for several years.

It was torn down a few years ago, and the material was used in a local woodworkers shop.

A note (Saunders and Meyers brought staves and lumber from the Moneta and Bedford area into Pen Hook, Va. Their small train line ran on wooden rails from the old "Pen Hook University" (a one room school) to the Pen Hook Station. When this small train came in, it was a real holiday for people watching it unload. The little engine for the train was brought in across Smith Mountain and many people remembered helping "tote" the train across the Station. (We never did know why they did not bring the engine directly to Pen Hook to unload it). Anyway for quite a while, the little engine pulled its loads from Bedford to Pen Hook and brought a little more excitement to the people of the area.)



Novelty was a flagstop near Penhook on way to Union Hall. It was used as a siding and passenger flagstop.

Perhaps one of the worst wrecks on the F and P line occurred at Mattocks curve near Mattox Cemetery. The wreck occurred one cold winter evening about dusk. The stoves and lights added much to the confusion as the train left the rails and turned over. Though no one was killed, several were burned and bruised. The home of Dr. G. O. Jiles, a few miles away, became the emergency hospital. It was reported that everyone was covered with smoke and soot, bruised and

bleeding. One man was running up and down the roadway screaming, "My legs are broken." According to the good doctor, one patient was treated with a paste of flour over his face to stop bleeding. Perhaps it was at this place that the engine turned over some logs and the same logs saved the engineer's life. (Just a few days before he had bawled the section foreman out for leaving the logs on the right-of-way.) Some looting was reported, one man had his handkerchief full of sugar, a lady had her apron full of flour.



The Glade Hill station had been converted into a home (across the road beside Glade Hill Garage) and is currently in use.

The Station at Redwood has been converted into a dwelling just to East of Pasley Grocery. The outline of the station may still be seen on the side of the building next to the store.

The old Railroad crossed the N. W. Tracks and came into Rocky Mount by Lane's Veneering and Ideal Lumber and crossing the N & W just to the south of present station. The road continued back of the Times Building and on to where the station that was located above where Henry Blair's Barber Shop was operated for several years. The turntable (for turning engine around) was located near where the Brown's Insurance and Rocky Mount Coal Company is currently located. It is

reported that all Norfolk and Western trains had to stop at the crossing near the depot now standing as the Franklin Pittsylvania owned the right-of-way.

Perhaps this railroad holds the official record for fatalities of any for the time it operated (52 years) chugging up and down hills and across wobbly trestles on a track seldom in first class shape. The only explanation we can offer is the fact that the train seldom could attain the speed that could make an accident fatal. We can only find records of a few: Frank Haley slipped and fell under the train at Glade Hill and before anyone could stop the train, he was crushed under the wheels: Nathan Rucker, a conductor went between the cars to insert a coupling and someone accidentally reversed the engine and he was killed. This accident is reported as happening at Pittsville. Ed Shelton was killed in an engine mishap. Lem Carter was struck when the train passed under the water hose on the tank near Pigg River Bridge and knocked off the train. He died shortly after the injury. Several near-deaths were reported of accidents and wrecks of the train. Clifton Doss, engineer, it is reported escaped scalding to death by a minute as in one wreck the engine turned over several times. Several were permanently injured in this wreck. Some carrying the injury to their graves.

Many humorous incidents are reported concerning the F and P — Wade Shield who grew up on the right-of-way of the track says "his father rushed home one day shouting, 'Did you know that Charlie's foot got the Moore cut off today while kicking the sand pipe?'" (The fireman's name was Charlie Moore.)

In 1922, Mr. Dudley sold the road to N. P. Angle at Rocky Mount for \$6,000. Mr. Angle, a leading citizen and businessman of Rocky Mount, who felt that to lose the railroad would be a step backwards for the county and the Town of Rocky Mount. Ten years later that backward step looked good to him as he lost \$2,569.00 the final year of the F and P's existence as a railroad. The last few years were hard years. The tracks all but held the rails, freight moved slowly and sometimes only once a week. It is reported that the last train trip from Pittsville to Gretna, a distance of eight miles - took eight hours.

Though the Southern tried hard to make a big time railroad of the F and P, but it was not destined to be. Better wagons,

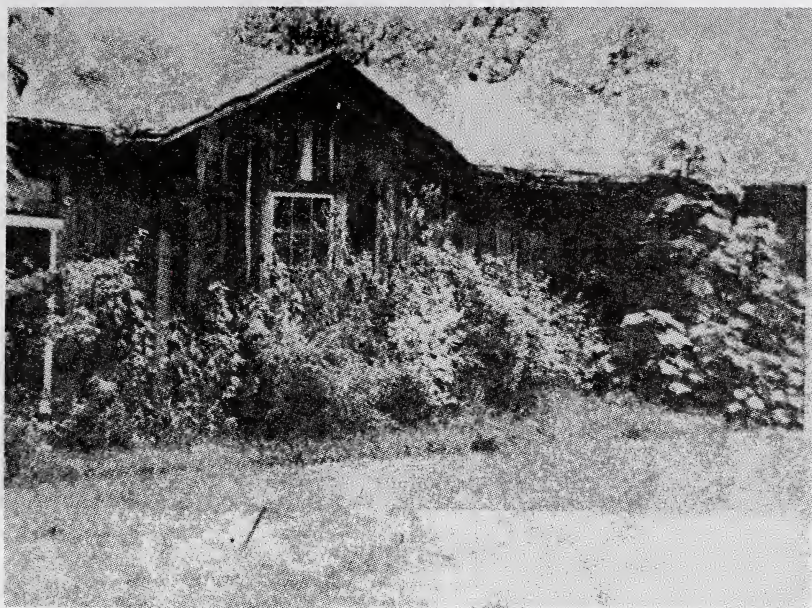
rubber tire buggies were being made and some early models of cars (Reo, Overland, and Chrysler). Roads were improving and the track and equipment of the railroad was wearing out. All these combined to make a non profit railroad, a burden that the Southern did not want to keep any longer than the lease compelled the operation. 1914 finally came around and it was the end of the line for the southern-operated Franklin and Pittsylvania. The Southern (it is reported) painted and cleaned all the old equipment and kissed the railroad good-bye.

Back safely in the fold of its original owners, Franklin and Pittsylvania counties, it went from bad to worse. Mr. Earl Ferguson served as Superintendent with Frank Laprade as Assistant, other officers of the operation were Charlie Bennett, Nat Angle and Mr. Charlie Davis. For seven long years the road staggered on serving the communities with less business each year and a deteriorating equipment and track. 1921 the railroad went into receivership. (Henry Ford contributed to the failure of the F and P as the "Model T" or "Tin Lizzie" and Ford truck prices were in reach of many people. The writer brought a 1923 Ford Model T for \$325.00 Please don't ask what he paid for the '73 Grand Torina this year. The cars and trucks began to haul most of the passengers and much of the freight.

Chapman Dudley operated the F and P as receiver from 1921 to 1922 and believe it or not the road showed a profit - \$928.00. Mr. Dudley was asked one day how long it took the train to make the run. He proudly replied "depends how many time she gets off the tracks." Someone laughingly once said they had three classes of tickets-one if you got on and stayed on; two, if you got off and walked, and class 3, if you got off and pushed, but all three cost the same one dollar for the length of the line.

Once a local preacher at Penhook was walking back from a trip down to see the Y (engine turntable) near the village the train overtook him and the engineer stopped the train and asked if he wanted a ride, the Reverend promptly responded, "No thanks, I am in a hurry."

STATIONS ON THE F AND P RAILROAD



Penhook



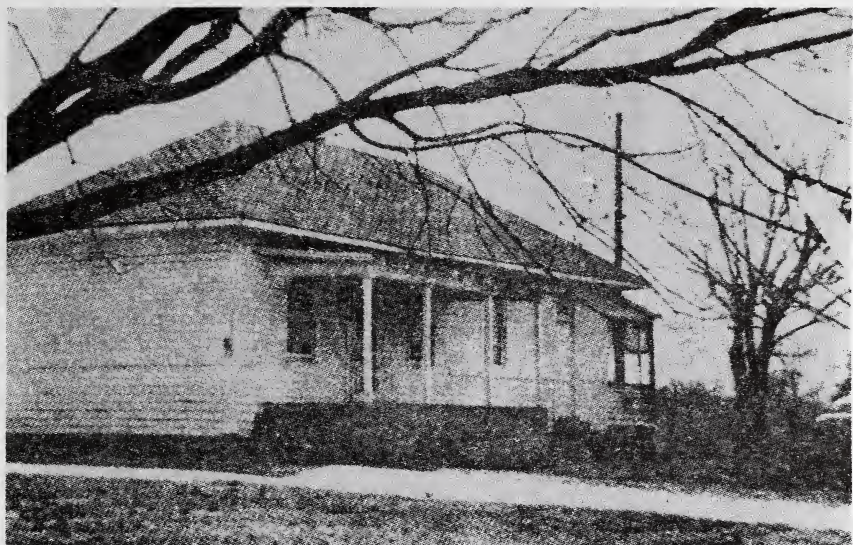
Gretna (Franklin Junction)



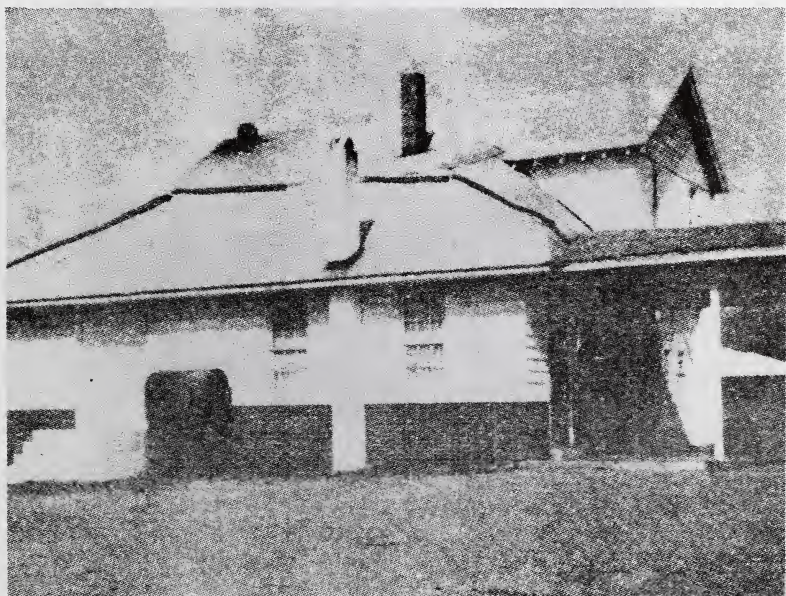
Pittsville



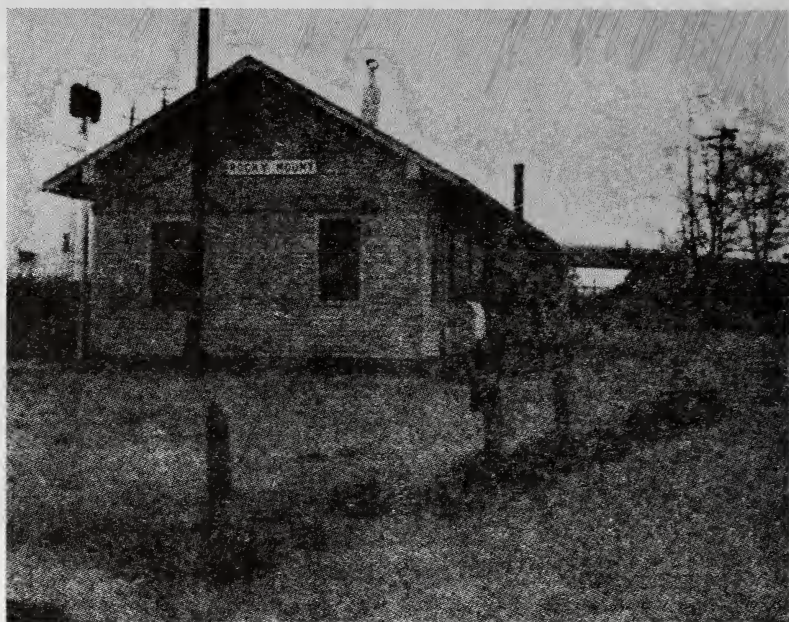
Toshes Station



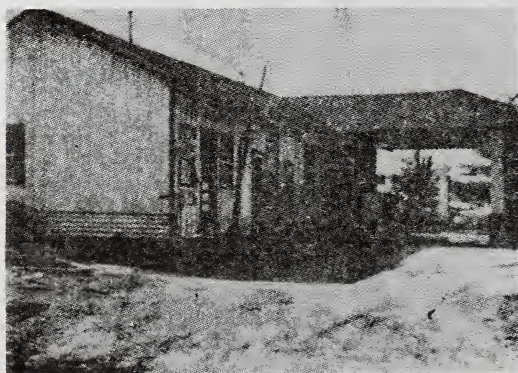
Glade Hill Station



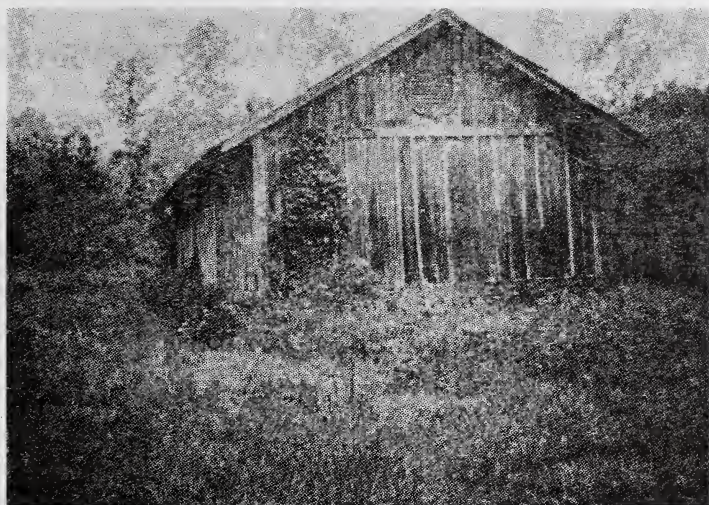
Redwood



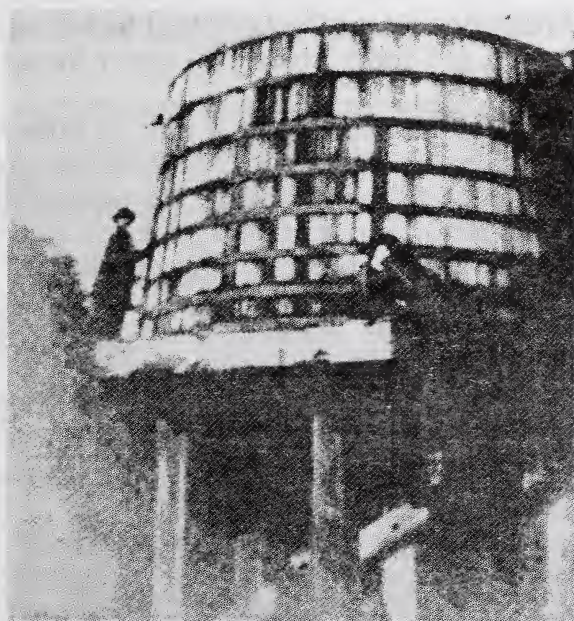
Rocky Mount



Union Hall



Sandy Level



Water Tank

The Franklin & Pittsylvania Had Humorous Fame

Bob Ramsey who was engineer for many years on the train, explained to the officials that he and Mrs. Ramsey were expecting the birth of a child and that it would be necessary that he be off the job that day. The day arrived and being unable to secure an engineer the Superintendent declared a holiday and the train did not run. The fireman, Mr. Vernon Davis, says the road still owes him \$3.00 for his salary that day. Legend says that section hands were paid \$1.10 per day and if they missed a spike and nicked a rail they were penalized ten cents for every nick.

It is interesting to note that the train never violated the blue law. It did not run on Sunday.

The first Monday was the big day when court was held at Rocky Mount. Everybody went to town. On one such day the train struck a mule and was derailed. One passenger who had testified at church on Sunday before he was ready to go, was down on his knees promising the Lord that he would serve Him if he was spared a few more years (We never found out if he really did or not).

Mr. and Mrs. Nat Angle were on a visit to Europe and Mr. Angle was asked what he did. He said that he was president of the Franklin and Pittsylvania Railroad. The people understood him to say Pennsylvania and from that time on he was a VIP and received the usual honors bestowed on dignitaries. (Thanks Mrs. West.)

It is said a man who worked on the F and P Railroad dreamed he was dead and he knocked at the pearly gates, he was asked where he was from and what he did. He answered - Franklin County and worked on F and P. St. Peter almost yelled, "Come right in, you are the first from Franklin and you've had trouble enough working on that railroad."

It is reported that a vacant lot in Gretna near the site of the Christian Church (the one destroyed in the tornado of 1918) was deeded to the F and P for 99 years and is still the property of the long bankrupt railroad. This is not official.

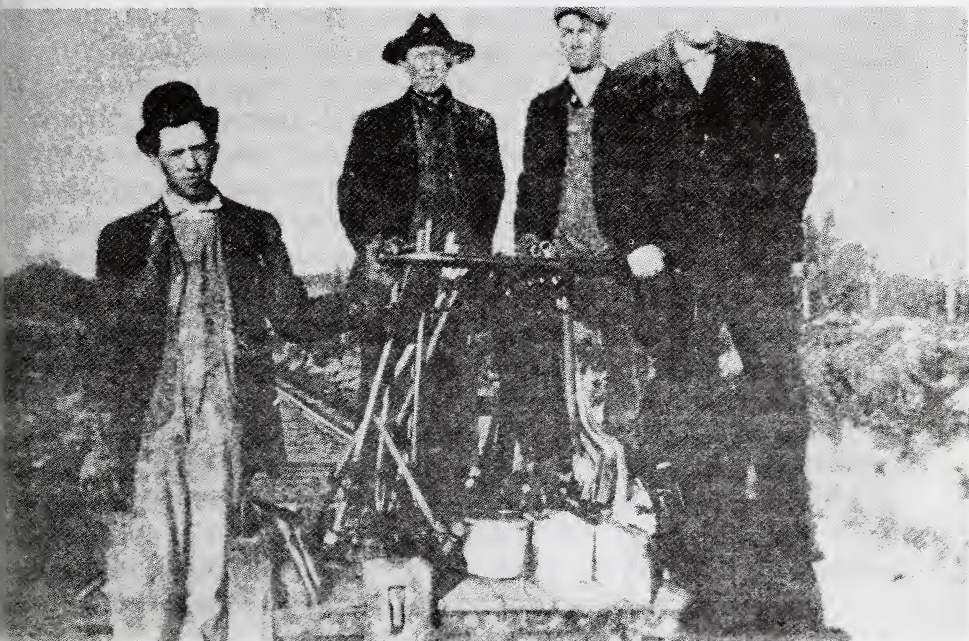
We have said much about the railroad but little or nothing

about the many men who spent their life or best years of their life working for the railroad. We cannot list all who worked on the road in construction and operation as we do not have the name or time to secure a complete list.

Several spent their life on the F and P, Ben Ferguson, The Horatio Algiers of this story, spent about 49 years working on the tracks. He started as a section hand and became Superintendent of the track before the line closed out. The Ferguson Home on the Franklin County side of Smith Mountain burned a year or two ago.

Zeb Myers, who was in charge of the Lavine Furnace Company at Pittsylvania served for many years as foreman of the tracks from Pittsville to Gretna. He recalls the days when the tracks became impassable for trains.

Earl Ferguson was superintendent of the operations most of the half a century and Mr. Nat Angle who bought the train and tracks in order to keep the train in operation. There are so many others, Clifton Doss, Bob Ramsey, Henry Bennett, Wade Shields, and the Scruggs brothers who served as standby operators when others could not work. Down Gretna way the Whip-O-Will whistle call of Clifton Doss will never be forgotten. Our apology to the many others.



CHAPTER 3

The Motor

Chapman Dudley, receiver for the bankrupt railroad sold the line to a company with Mr. Nat Angle as the president, realizing that the track was sharable and the train could not make the run as such, the new company purchased a bus that resembled a small school bus equipped with iron wheels to fit the rails. It was powered by a gas engine. The new motor while far from as glamorous as the shining black steam train, proved to be a better schedule keeper and not so adept at riding the ties as the train had been. The service is shown by the testimony of a former passenger, Mrs. A. D. Ramsey, who used the motor for transportation from Penhook to the residence of the late Dr. G. O. Giles to attend a private school as High Schools and school buses were not in operation at that time. Mrs. Ramsey comments, "I do not recall being late one time." The bus operated from 1923 to 1933 carrying passengers to and from Rocky Mount and Penhook. The old engine hauled freight during most of that time making one or two trips a week if possible. We recall the efficient services of the drivers of the motor. Harold Boothe, Elbert Doss, Elwood Holland, Henry Bennett, John Lee Ramsey, and others (our apology to any if we have skipped their name). An accident involving the motor and a farmer and wagon led to a damage suit against the railroad. The little railroad that had struggled for over one-half a century and considered by many, legendary, was ordered mercifully to be sole. Yes, the train that kept "thinking I can" was sole for what it was - scrap. The track was dismantled and the ties used for wood by farmers along the right-of-way.

This story of the F and P some forty years after her last run considered by many as legendary, but in reality existed and proved that "you do not have to be a success to be loved" perhaps some times we even love our problems. Perhaps the readers will be telling their children of the Legendary Franklin and Pittsylvania Railroad that was as real as the county names.

CHAPTER 4

The T That Became A Railroad Lizzie



This is the story of a Model T Ford that discarded its rubber tires and snatched the iron wheels from a section car and became perhaps the one and only "Lizzie of the Rails" (we never heard of any other Model T with train wheels). Mr. Chapman Dudley, operator and receiver for the F and P, boast of having Lizzie commissioned and christened into service shortly after he began operating the railroad. (No, the car could not run on the roads, the roads were too bad and the metal wheels sank too deep.)

The converted Ford car proved very useful to the railroad as it was used sometimes to carry the mail and other small jobs when the aging train was too feeble to go or else was on the ties trying to get back on the rails. Gas must have been somewhat a problem but as in case of the lawn mower today, tin cans were available. Gas was 15 to 18 cents a gallon and a gallon took old Lizzie several miles (perhaps twenty to twenty-five miles).

While converted as a business car, it proved to be a very good pleasure car as the hills were no problem and the tracks seldom were muddy. The train proved no problem to the car as it did not run on Sunday and the car could be driven on sidings to let the train pass. I hope we have proved to our readers that the beloved old F and P Railroad was a pioneer in many fields and not all in areas of failures. Yes, again, you do not have to be a success to be loved. As you watch the country side through your car windows, please think of the old railroad that served this county when neither you or the care were here.

"THE PUMPKIN VINE RAILROAD"

The Economy of Franklin County has been dependent upon its two railroads for some 92 years. The Norfolk and Western Branch line lovingly dubbed the "Pumpkin Vine Line" because of its circuituous tracks lines through the county. The other line, the Franklin and Pittsylvania Railroad sometimes called the F and P, (Fast and Perfect) now Legendary. Both these railroads added much to the transportation system in Franklin County. They served the public before the motor and airway travel existed and roads were just trails. Progress and change has all but eliminated the once prosperous "Pumpkin Vine" line and perhaps in a few years it will become Legendary as the F and P has.

A growing need for a better way of trasportation from Lynchburg to the Ohio River gave birth to the idea of a railroad from that city to beyond Roanoke and connect with the Ohio River. The canal had worked very well to Lynchburg on the James River, but the high mountains stymied the extension of the water way. The Virginia Assembly in 1839 incorporated "The Virginia and Tennessee Railroad Company." Work on the project was pushed with vigor and in 1852 the railroad reached Salem passing by the then almost unnoticed "Big Lick."(Roanoke) The Norfolk and Western became interested in the line about 1886 when the need for a junction with the south at Winston-Salem and Durham became evident. This line became the Winston-Salem Division. Directors were: Harry S. Trout, Jr.

The oldest records shows that the Virginia portion of the line was incorporated in 1886. About April 20th a meeting was held at the Hotel Roanoke. At this meeting, Col. David E. Houston was elected president; H. C. Lester of Martinsville, Vice President; S. W. Jamison, Secretary and E. H. Stewart, Treasurer, also of Martinsville. Directors were: Harry S. Trout, Jr.; Fleming Christian; Dr. J. D. Kirk; P. L. Terry; J. M. Campbell; Maj. Andrew Lewis; T. H. Starkey and Jos. T. Engleby.

The part of the Road in North Carolina was incorporated in February, 1887 with Col. F. H. Fries, president; F. J. Stone; C. B. Watson; George Henshaw; C. J. Fogle as officers.

THE OLD WINSTON LINE (Pumpkinvine) of the N & W

As one slowly turns the pages of time, perhaps no era of time has made a more profound impression than that short span when the "Iron Horse" and steam power opened up a new world to the country and Franklin County was no exception. I remember very vividly the iron monsters, puffing and breathing smoke and fire as it roared by. Many many times I brushed across from the F and P Railroad station to the N & W to board the "Pumpkinvine Special" for Roanoke. Now as I drive by the old station and see the all but deserted building slowly rotting down and the tracks most hidden by grass and weeds something within my being seems to choke me. A few more years and what I saw and enjoyed with my own eyes, will be in some dusty library stashed away with all the other yesterdays. And the historians call this Progress?

The economy of Franklin County was dependent upon its two railroads for some 92 years as the F and P connected with the Southern at Gretna and the N & W affectionately called the "Pumpkin Vine" because of its circuituous route as it threaded among the hills of the Blue Ridge mountains. The Railroad offered the farmers a way to sell their produce, (chickens, calves, milk, tobacco and buy manufactured implements, machinery and fertilizer). The horse and wagon and the dirt roads were inadequate for progress. Soon many other farm products could be sold and materials hauled in by rail, thus the need for a better way of transportation led to the railroad in Franklin.

It is interesting to note that the need for rail connection between canals and rivers led to construction of the first railroads in our State. The Virginia in 1839, incorporated the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad and soon it reached Salem passing the then almost unnoticed "Big Lick." By 1886 a need for a junction with the south at Winston-Salem and Durham became evident.

On June 18, 1889, Henry S. Trout of Roanoke was made president of the Roanoke and Southern Railroad. A. Onderdonk was appointed chief engineer and Robert Buckner was elected director to represent the city of Roanoke. It was stated that by 1891 rail service was opened as far as the city of

Martinsville and in early 1892 the line from Winston-Salem to Roanoke was opened for service. This service meant a boom for Franklin County as freight and passenger service became available and the products of Franklin could now reach market.

The railroad at this time consist in addition to the track 5 locomotives, 49 flat cars, 25 box cars, 5 passenger cars and 2 combination cars.

In March 1892, the Roanoke and Southern was leased to the Norfolk and Western Railway and became the Winston-Salem Division with D. H. Barger as Superintendent. In 1893, Mr. Barger was transferred and H. H. S. Handy became the Supintendent of the Winston-Salem Division. Three years later the Winston-Salem Division was purchased by the Norfolk and Western and made a part of its system. The progress and development was very consistent from 1896 to 1926. With the cooperation of the railroad new industries began to locate in the county. Particular mention should be made of the rapid growth of Furniture manufacturing industry not only in cities of Franklin County, but along a large part of the northern section of the line.

It is impossible to evaluate the contribution of the N & W to the progress and economy of the county. The fertile soil of Franklin and the abundant crops of corn, wheat, and tobacco gave added incentive to Agriculture. The Bench land which has an average of 1500 foot elevation became the mecca for fruit production as someone said "no where else in the world can the Albermarle Pippin grow as in Franklin County." Apples by 1926 were being shipped to the leading markets of this and foreign markets.

Changes have come to the "Old Pumpkin Vine" line. The steam engines have been replaced by the giant diesels. It is not an uncommon sight to count 100 to 110 cars being pulled by three to five big diesel engines. The crew on many lines still consist of: a brakeman, flagman, conductor, engineer and in some instances a fireman, but the train is longer and the lay-overs and waiting to call just as long as years ago. The pay is classified as good, but hours are long. Grade crossings have been eliminated at every place possible and very modern electric equipment for safety has been maintained on the line. The road bed is still in good condition. The Norfolk and Western has equipped the Winston line with the latest in type of

Automatic signal and adequate switch lights and sidings to insure the best in service to its customers.

The economy of the county has been greatly improved by not only the transportation service, but the taxes paid by the Norfolk and Western to the Town of Rocky Mount and Boones Mill and the County. Over the years the taxes based on the county and town rate have contributed a sizeable amount in revenue for the development of the County and the towns.

We are not prophets, we cannot read our tomorrows. Perhaps the rails will disappear as other ages have moved on into oblivion, but to use the thinking of a prominent young railroad man (Kenneth Layman) "There is a future in railroading, it is necessary and will continue for years to come." And in the language of high official of the county - "We need the N & W Railroad, it is necessary for our continued progress."

We would not forget those countless men and women who in the profession of railroading have contributed so much for so long to the development and progress of our county and towns. We sincerely hope that in the many factors recognized at the Centennial in October that the railroads (F and P and N & W) will be among the top to be honored.

